

INYO National Forest

MINARET VISTA Nature Trail



U. S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

California



The Inyo National Forest welcomes you to take this enjoyable 15 minute walk. Numbered posts along the trail correspond to the paragraphs in this leaflet.

Help preserve the beauty of the trail by protecting the flowers and plants so others may enjoy them.

1. **VOLCANIC ROCK.** This rock was formed from ancient volcanic ash—some 150 million years old—that was buried within the earth for centuries and was gradually changed by heat and pressure to its present form. Later, it was uncovered by earth movements and erosion.

The prominent peak to the south is Mammoth Mountain which divides the east and west drainages of the mountain range. It was an active volcano some 350,000 years ago.

2. **TREE SKELETONS.** These pine trees, twisted by heavy winds and snows, were later destroyed by fire. Be sure your campfire, cigarette or match does not create a desolate scene like this.

3. **RED FIR** (*Abies magnifica*). Red fir—also called “silver tip”—are often used as Christmas trees. They are one of two species of fir trees found in the Inyo National Forest. The other, white fir, grows at lower elevations.

4. **RED ELDER** (*Sambucus racemosa*). The pithy stems of these bushes were once used by shepherds to fashion rustic flutes. The species with red fruit are slightly poisonous to humans, but the fruit of the black and blue-berried varieties are edible when cooked. Birds and other wild-life relish elderberries.

5. **THE GLASS MOUNTAINS AND THE WHITE MOUNTAINS.** In the distance, to the left, is the forested Glass Mountain Range. Layers of volcanic material built up to form the 11,127-foot Glass Mountain Peak. The range takes its name from black volcanic glass, called “obsidian,” which is found on the slopes.

The prominent white mountain in the center on the skyline is Montgomery Peak, reaching an elevation of 13,465 feet. It lies just this side of the California-Nevada State line.

South of Montgomery Peak to the right, on the skyline, lies the White Mountain Range with peaks towering to over 14,000 feet. Here also is the “Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest.” Some of these trees are over 4,000 years old—the oldest living things known.

6. **BIG SAGEBRUSH** (*Artemisia tridentata*). This is the most abundant shrub in western North America; it covers vast areas of semi-arid land. In the early days, the shrub provided fuel for Indians and explorers. Although the sagebrush has certain medicinal qualities, its yellow pollen aggravates many cases of hayfever.

7. **GOOSEBERRY CURRANT** (*Ribes montigenum*). This spiny-stemmed shrub is usually found in moist, shady areas where it grows close to the ground. Its red berries are used for jams and jellies. In other parts of California the gooseberry helps spread a tree-killing disease called “white pine blister rust.” The blister rust spreads to healthy pine trees from the gooseberry currant. It cannot spread directly from tree to tree.

8. **SNOWBERRY** (*Symphoricarpos vaccinoides*). This shrub is widely distributed through North America, and ten species occur in the West alone.

Snowberries are highly regarded for the beauty of their foliage and fruit, and are widely grown as ornamental shrubs.

9. **SAN JOAQUIN RIDGE.** This ridge, running to the northwest, reaches a maximum elevation of 11,600 feet at San Joaquin Mountain. Volcanic eruptions formed this ridge some three million years ago. The volcanic rock beneath the spot where you are standing is much older, and was formed about 150 million years ago.

10. **CANYON HEADWATERS.** The Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River originates at Thousand Island Lake which is in the mountains to the left of the canyon.

11. **WAX CURRANT** (*Ribes cereum*). This member of the gooseberry family is a common shrub in the Mammoth Lakes area, growing up to five feet in height on many of the dry, open slopes and ridges. Its twigs have value for deer food, and its bright red berries are a favorite food of birds and rodents.

12. **FORGET-ME-NOT** (*Lappula floribunda*). Many blue flowers bloom on this plant in the spring. It is also called “stickseed” because of its tiny, hook-covered seeds which cling to passing people or animals. The Indians obtained a delicate purple dye from its roots.

Common flowers seen along this trail during the summer months include the yellow sulphur flower, with its clump of short basal leaves; the red Indian paintbrush with leaflets which appear to have been dipped in color; and the blue lupine with its finger-like leaves.

13. **LODGEPOLE PINE** (*Pinus contorta*). The lodgepole pine is commonly found around moun-

tain meadows and on lake shores in the Sierra. But because of its thin bark, it is easily destroyed by forest fire. Its name is derived from the Indian practice of using young lodgepole saplings in constructing their lodges.

14. PUMICE. This porous froth was thrown from a series of volcanic holes, or vents, in the earth nearly 10,000 years ago. A layer of this pumice covers the area from Mammoth Mountain north to the Mono Craters, and reaches a depth of 20 feet in some places.

15. THE RITTER RANGE. Sharp peaks, spectacular glaciers, and beautiful lakes lie within the Minarets Wilderness of the Inyo National Forest. The wilderness features are preserved for all time since motorized travel, roads, and commercial developments are completely excluded from the area. Visitors enjoy this high country either on foot or horseback.

16. SAN JOAQUIN RIVER. On the distant valley floor, the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River meanders through Pumice Flat and the Minaret Falls area. There are five National Forest campgrounds along the valley floor; two are located at these scenic areas.

17. WHITEBARK PINE (*Pinus albicaulis*). This slow-growing tree is native to the high, wind-swept regions of the West. It is an extremely hardy tree and withstands heavy snows and strong winds. In many locations near the timberline, these trees are dwarfed into shapeless shrubs, and occasionally are found growing horizontally along the ground.

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS WALK THROUGH A SMALL PART OF THE INYO NATIONAL FOREST. IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO KEEP THIS LEAFLET, PLEASE RETURN IT TO THE BOX ON THE SIGN.

"The Forest Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the principle of multiple use management of the Nation's forest resources for sustained yields of wood, water, forage, wildlife, and recreation. Through forestry research, cooperation with the States and private forest owners, and management of the National Forests and National Grasslands, it strives — as directed by Congress — to provide increasingly greater service to a growing Nation."



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